



# DUTCHESS LAND CONSERVANCY

*Preserving Open Land in Dutchess County*

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April 19, 2016

Honorable Anthony Foxx, Secretary of Transportation

U.S Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE

Washington DC, 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing in support of the Dutchess County and Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association's (HVRTA) application to complete a new portion of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail (HVRT) – an eight-mile trail connection between the Village of Millerton and Under Mountain Road in the Town of Ancram. The project will include the tunnel crossing of NYS Route 22 at the junction of Route 22 and Orphan Farm Road (Copake Falls) and three pedestrian bridges connecting the trail at Black Grocery Road in Copake. The end result will be the completion of this long awaited section of rail trail resulting in approximately 28 miles of pedestrian path from Wassaic (Dutchess County) to Hillsdale (Columbia County), linking to New York City by way of the Metro North Railroad at the Wassaic Train Station. Upon completion, the full HVRT is expected to be 46 miles long from Wassaic to Chatham.

The existing completed sections of the HVRT have seen great success since 1996 with thousands of visitors, young and old alike, using this great linear trail annually for outdoor recreation such as walking, running, biking, roller blading, and cross country skiing. The current proposal will join two counties (Dutchess and Columbia), NY State Parks, and a not-for-profit organization (HVRTA) in a collaborative project which will be a destination location for thousands of people from near and far.

Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is a private non-profit land conservation organization dedicated to preserving the scenic, agricultural and environmental resources of Dutchess County, NY and the surrounding area. Since its founding in 1985, it's protected nearly 40,000 acres in Dutchess and Columbia Counties, working with private landowners, government agencies and conservation partners, ensuring that important resource land is preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of the public.

DLC has been supporting the work of Dutchess County and the HVRTA to successfully complete the Rail Trail since the early 90's, starting with the first portion that opened in 1996 (Amenia north to Coleman Station (4.5 miles)), the second section in 1998 (Under Mt. Road, Ancram to the Taconic State Park entrance, Copake Falls (4 mi)), a third section in 2000 (Coleman Station north to the Village of Millerton (3.6 miles)), and another section by 2005 (Amenia south to the Wassaic Metro North Railroad station (3 miles)).

Having a great interest in this incredible public resource, DLC has been protecting land that abuts the Rail Trail since the first section was laid out, helping to ensure that the views from the trail (outside of village core areas) remain open and rural in perpetuity.

We encourage you to favorably consider a grant to Dutchess County and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association to aid them in completing the next important "connection" of the Rail Trail in eastern Dutchess and Columbia Counties. Thank you for your interest in this great project.

Sincerely,

Rebecca E. C. Thornton  
President

